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THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILIP STRONG.

By REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON,
Author of "In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?" "Malcom Kirk," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

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invited himself to stay all night and then had accused his entertainer of living too extravagantly and called him an insincere preacher. Add to all this the singular fact that he had declared his name to be "Brother Man" and that he spoke with a calmness that was the very incarnation of peace, and Philip's wonder reached its limit.

In response to his wife's appeal Philip rose abruptly and went to the front door. He opened it, and a whirl of snow danced in. The wind had changed, and the moan of a coming heavy storm was in the air.

The moment that he opened the door his strange guest also arose, and putting on his hat he said, as he moved slowly toward the hall: "I must be going. I thank you for your hospitality, madam."

Philip stood holding the door partly open. He was perplexed to know just what to do or say.

"Where will you stay tonight? Where is your home?"

"My home is with my friends," replied the man. He laid his hand on the door, opened it and had stepped one foot out on the porch when Philip, seized with an impulse, laid his hand on his arm, gently but strongly pulled him back into the hall, shut the door and placed his back against it.

"You cannot go out into this storm until I know whether you have a place to go to for the night."

The man hesitated curiously, shuffled his feet on the mat, put his hand up to his face and passed it across his eyes with a gesture of great weariness.



Philip stood holding the door partly open. There was a look of loneliness and of unknown sorrow about his whole figure that touched Philip's keenly sensitive spirit irresistibly. If the man was a little out of his right mind, he was probably harmless. They could not turn him out into the night if he had nowhere to go.

"Brother Man," said Philip gently, "would you like to stay here tonight? Have you anywhere else to stay?"

"You are afraid I will do harm. But, no. See. Let us sit down."

He laid his hat on the table, resumed his seat and asked Philip for a Bible. Philip handed him one. He opened it and read a chapter from the prophet Isaiah, and then, sitting in the chair, bowing his head between his hands, he offered a prayer of such wonderful beauty and spiritual refinement of expression that Mr. and Mrs. Strong listened with awed astonishment.

When he had uttered the amen, Mrs. Strong whispered to Philip: "Surely we cannot shut him out with the storm. We will give him the spare room."

Philip said not a word. He at once built up a fire in the room and in a few moments invited the man into it.

"Brother Man," he said simply, "stay here as if this were your own house. You are welcome for the night."

"Yes, heartily welcome," said Philip's wife, as if to make amends for any doubts she had felt before.

For reply the "Brother Man" raised his hand almost as if in benediction. And they left him to his rest.

CHAPTER XII.

In the morning Philip knocked at his guest's door to waken him for breakfast. Not a sound could be heard within. He waited a little while and then knocked again. It was as still as before. He opened the door softly and looked in.

To his amazement, there was no one there. The bed was made up neatly, everything in the room was in its place, but the strange being who had called himself "Brother Man" was gone.

Philip exclaimed, and his wife came in.

"So our queer guest has flown! He must have been very still about it. I heard no noise. Where do you suppose he is? And who do you suppose he is?"

"Are you sure there ever was such a person, Philip? Don't you think you dreamed all that about the 'Brother Man'?" Mrs. Strong had not quite forgiven Philip for his skeptical questioning of the reality of the man with the lantern who had driven the knife into the desk.

"Yes, it's a fact. When, now, Sarah, well, if our 'Brother Man' was a dream he was the most curious dream this family ever had, and if he was crazy he was the most remarkable insane person I ever saw."

"Of course he was crazy. All that he said about our living so extravagantly!"

"Do you think he was crazy in that particular?" asked Philip in a strange voice. His wife noticed it at the time, but its true significance did not become real to her until afterward. He went to the front door and found it was unlocked. Evidently the guest had gone out that way. The heavy storm of the night had covered up any possible signs of footsteps. It was still snowing furiously.

Philip went into his study for the forenoon as usual, but he did very little writing. His wife could hear him pacing the floor restlessly.

About 10 o'clock he came down stairs and declared his intention of going out into the storm to see if he couldn't settle down to work better.

He went out and did not return until the middle of the afternoon. Mrs. Strong was a little alarmed.

"Where have you been all this time, Philip? In this terrible storm too! You are a monument of snow. Stand out here in the kitchen while I sweep you off."

Philip obediently stood still while his wife walked around him with a broom and good naturedly submitted to being swept down, "as if I were being worked into shape for a snow man," he said.

"Where have you been? Give an account of yourself."

"I have been seeing how some other people live. Sarah, the 'Brother Man' was not so very crazy after all. He has more than half converted me."

"Did you find out anything about him?"

"Yes; several of the older citizens here recognized my description of him. They say he is harmless and has quite a history; was once a wealthy mill owner in Clinton. He wanders about the country, living with any one who will take him in. It is a queer case. I must find out more about him. But I'm hungry. Can I have a bite of something?"

"Haven't you had dinner?"

"No; haven't had time."

"Where have you been?"

"Among the tenements."

"How are the people getting on there?"

"I cannot tell. It almost chokes me to eat when I think of it."

"Now, Philip, what makes you take it so seriously? How can you help all that suffering? You are not to blame for it."

"Maybe I am for a part of it. But whether I am or not there the suffering is. And I don't know that we ought to ask who is to blame in such cases. At any rate, supposing the fathers and mothers in the tenements are to blame themselves by their own sinfulness, does that make innocent children and helpless babes any warmer or better clothed and fed? Sarah, I have seen things in these four hours' time that make me want to join the bomb throwers of Europe almost."

Mrs. Strong came up behind his chair as he sat at the table eating and placed her hand on his brow. She grew more anxious every day over his growing personal feeling for others. It seemed to her it was becoming a passion with him, wearing him out, and she feared its results as winter deepened and the strike in the mills remained unbroken.

"You cannot do more than one man, Philip," she said, with a sigh.

"No, but if I can only make the church see its duty at this time and act the Christlike way a great many persons will be saved." He dropped his knife and fork, wheeled around abruptly in his chair and faced her with the question, "Would you give up this home and be content to live in a simpler fashion than we have been used to since we came here?"

"Yes," replied his wife quietly. "I will go anywhere and suffer anything with you. What are you thinking of now?"

"I need a little more time. There is a crisis near at hand in my thought of what Christ would require of me. My dear, I am sure we shall be led by the spirit of truth to do what is necessary and for the better saving of men."

He kissed his wife tenderly and went up stairs again to his work. All through the rest of the afternoon and in the evening, as he shaped his church and pulpit work, the words of the "Brother Man" rang in his ears and the situation at the tenements rose in the successive panoramas before his eyes. As the storm increased in fury with the coming darkness, he felt that it was typical in a certain sense of his own condition. He abandoned the work he had been doing at his desk, and kneeling down at his couch he prayed.

Mrs. Strong, coming up to the study to see how his work was getting on, found him kneeling there and went and knelt beside him, while together they sought the light through the storm.

So the weeks went by, and the first Sunday of the next month found Philip's Christ message even more direct and personal than any he had brought to his people before. He had spent much of the time going into the work-

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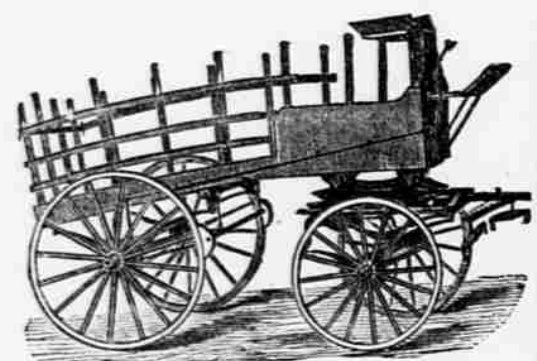
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COLEMAN.

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H. B. Wales has planted out a lot of shade trees and painted his house.

Joe Sanders has planted out 150 peach trees. Joe has a good voice for peach dumpings.

Miss Maud Coleman was out from the city, Tuesday, to see her old friend Miss Vina Divine, who is quite sick.

J. C. Kennedy, Roanoke, Tenn., says, "I cannot say too much for DeWitt's Witch Hazel Salve. One box of it cured what the doctors called an incurable ulcer on my jaw." Cures piles and all skin diseases. Look out for worthless imitations. D. W. Loar.

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